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LETTERS TO THE

The 'Smear' Smear

I find it strange that The Post failed to tell its readers anything about the substance of the charges that TV Guide has leveled against CBS News and its attack on Gen. William C. Westmoreland in the documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," though The Post ran a 2,200-word article by Tom Shales on the story ["The 'Smear' Controversy," Style, May 22].

Here are some of the things that TV Guide discovered, with the help of leaks from CBS staffers incensed by the violations of CBS News regulations and the rigged research that went into the program:

1. One of the chief witnesses against Gen. Westmoreland, Sam Adams, was paid \$25,000 by CBS News and was given a rehearsal prior to his on-camera interview. CBS News standards require that all such interviews be spontaneous and unrehearsed except in rare cases, when approval is given by the head of CBS News, and the audience is informed that the interview was not spontaneous.

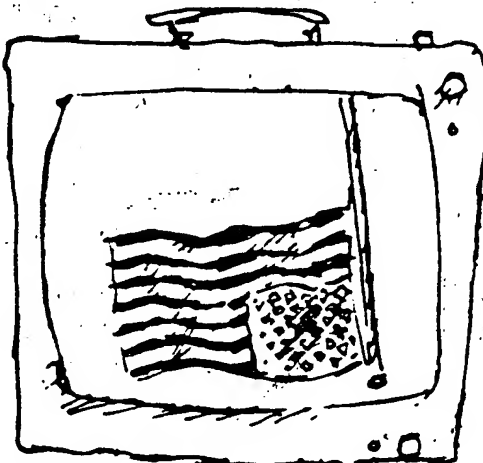
2. Gen. Westmoreland, when interviewed by Mike Wallace, said at least 10 times that the number of Vietcong thrown into the Tet offensive proved that the Army's estimates of Vietcong strength were overstated, not understated, as the CBS program contended. That argument was not aired. Instead, Mr. Wallace told the viewers just the opposite.

3. Gen. Westmoreland was shown confidently asserting that the enemy infiltration rate from the north in the fall of 1967 was 20,000 a month, and Mr. Wallace used that to make the point that Gen. Westmoreland had falsified the figures in 1967, when he had said the rate was around 7,000 a month. The full transcript of Gen. Westmoreland's interview shows that he expressed uncertainty about the figures and said he would have to check his records. He did so, and wrote to Mr. Wallace to say that the lower figure was correct. Mr. Wallace ignored the correction and used the incorrect figure to convict Gen. Westmoreland of lying.

4. Mr. Wallace explained to Gen. Westmoreland that he had not interviewed his top intelligence officer, Gen. Phillip Davidson, a key figure in the case CBS was making, because Mr. Davidson was "very

5. CBS created the impression that Gen. Westmoreland had ordered his staff officers, who were negotiating order-of-battle estimates with the CIA, not to permit the estimate of enemy strength to go above 300,000. The head of the MACV delegation, Gen. George Godding, had told CBS that was not true, and Col. Gains Hawkins, one of the negotiators, told CBS four times that he had not been given any numerical ceiling. CBS used Mr. Hawkins and an officer who did not even represent Gen. Westmoreland's headquarters in an effort to buttress the charge that there was a ceiling.

6. The producer of the program, George Crile, had his mind made up



By Ohlsson

that Gen. Westmoreland was guilty of doctoring intelligence data before he began his investigation. He edited the interviews to support that view and killed entirely important interviews, such as the one with Walt W. Rostow, that demolished the argument.

Mr. Shales did not mention these or any of the other specific serious charges leveled against CBS News. Mr. Shales devoted 825 words to the fact that TV Guide is published by Walter Annenberg, a friend of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, and to the supposed implications of that fact.

On a WRC talk show, Mr. Shales explained that he had not bothered to check out the accuracy of any of the stories presented on another CBS program, "People Like Us," because CBS News is a prestigious organization, and it was not his job to question its veracity. Apparently

graphs to a discussion of Walter Annenberg, the publisher of TV Guide. Mr. Shales tells us Mr. Annenberg is a "conservative millionaire," "a long-time devoted Republican," "bosom buddies with Richard Nixon" and "an intimate pal of Ronald Reagan."

What does all of this have to do with the merits of the argument presented in the TV Guide article under discussion? If articles in magazines or newspapers are to be judged not on their merits but on personal and political facts about their publishers, journalism as we know it would come to an end, replaced by a series of uninformative personal vendettas.

WILLIAM F. GAVIN

McLean

As amazed as I was to read Mr. Shales' smugly suggestive and condescending piece on TV Guide's "Anatomy of a Smear," I was even more astounded that this drivel got by the editors.

After suffering through some six paragraphs of innuendo suggesting that the TV Guide article may be nothing but some sort of conspiratorial outgrowth of President Reagan's friendship with TV Guide publisher Walter Annenberg, Mr. Shales finally addresses the merits of the article.

More important, however, Mr. Shales' suggestive diatribe against the TV Guide article fails on two counts: it never addresses the article's specific criticisms of the CBS documentary on U.S. reporting of events in Vietnam, and it suffers from a narrow, self-centered view of investigative journalism. Mr. Shales complains that TV Guide's examination of the CBS documentary "may help bring about a chill on investigative" reporting. What does he think the TV Guide article was, anyway?

I'm afraid Mr. Shales wouldn't recognize an investigative report anywhere—unless it came from the fash-